



**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE
MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday, June 29, 2023
Granite Reef Senior Center Room 1
1700 N. Granite Reef Rd.
Scottsdale, AZ 85257

PRESENT: Chairperson Laurie LaPat-Polasko (telephonically), Vice-chair Marsha Lipps, Commissioners Steve Coluccio, Mark Hackbarth, Kerry Olsson, Jeffrey Smith, and Savannah Engelking

STAFF: Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director; Scott Hamilton, Senior Trails Planner; Police Chief Jeff Walther; Natural Resources Coordinators Dave Myers and John Loilet

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chair Lipps called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members present as noted above.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no members of the public who wished to speak.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of the Regular Meeting minutes of June 1, 2023

COMMISSIONER HACKBARTH MOVED TO APPROVE THE JUNE 1, 2023 MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES. COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO, VICE-CHAIR LIPPS, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, HACKBARTH, OLSSON, SMITH, AND ENGELKING VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

5. POLICE STAFFING FOR THE PARKS AND PRESERVE

Police Chief Walther provided an update on police staffing for the parks and Preserve. He said that three internal candidates were chosen during the police park ranger selection process. The officers will undergo extensive training and are expected to begin their new positions once the field training program has concluded on September 10, 2023.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Chief Walther explained that the Police Park Rangers uniform will be a tan shirt and green pants with patches matching the regular Scottsdale police uniforms. Mr. Ekblaw said that they anticipate the Park Rangers will spend time with

Preserve staff as well as the Fire Department and learning about procedures specific to the Preserve. It was noted that staff and the Police Department will be working with City legal staff to strengthen language regarding the laws and writing citations.

Chief Walther said that the hope is that the department will eventually get enough funding for six park rangers. He gave assurance that the three people who have been selected are committed to the park system and the Preserve and will act as ambassadors for the Police Department and the City. He talked briefly about the process for acquiring additional horses for the department, noting that the park rangers will go through mounted school.

6. PROTECT THE PRESERVE PROCESS UPDATE

Staff provided an update on the process to review costs and programs to protect the McDowell Sonoran Preserve.

- Council and Task Force Process update

Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director, said that the process time frame is still estimated to be March through August with the Task Force planning for the first study session with Council in September. He is working to update numbers in the presentation given to the Task Force a few months ago.

- Updates to cost projections

Mr. Ekblaw reviewed updates to the four key categories, focusing on annual costs. The four key categories include: Daily Preserve Activities and Operations, Sonoran Desert Preservation and Education, Habitat Protection, and Cultural History Protection. He noted that the document was based on the presentation given to Council two years ago, with redundancies removed and adjustments to the numbers. Mr. Ekblaw noted that he is waiting for initial feedback from the consultants regarding the ERP and the key monitoring things that should be looked at. The focus is primarily in the categories of flora, fauna, washes/water/riparian, and soil. The Commission can expect to see more detail at the next meeting.

The presentation included a review of one-time commission cost projections; focus on the tax expiring in 2034; strategic opportunities with the expiring tax; construction cost estimates; and the Preserve Commission cost projection worksheet, five-year program for the Preserve. Upcoming presentations to the Commission will include City Treasurer's Office projections.

Commissioners asked clarifying questions about cost estimates presented during the presentation.

7. STAFF REPORTS

- Mountain rescue data

Scott Hamilton, Senior Trails Planner, said that because of the recent wildfires, the Fire Department was unable to provide a complete listing of mountain rescue data. He anticipates that the data will be prepared in time for the July 13 meeting and expects that Fire Department representatives will be available during that meeting with information on the Diamond Fire.

Mr. Hamilton gave an overview of the Diamond Fire, which started northeast of 128th Street and Ranch Gate and traveled east from there. He described the efforts that have been taken to control the fire and closure locations. Fraesfield Trailhead has been serving as the incident command base with a complete mobile base set up in the equestrian parking lot. The area will likely be reopened after the 4th of July holiday. Fire crews will likely remain in the area for the next few weeks.

- Ecological Resource Plan

Mr. Hamilton said that staff is working with the consultants to develop a list of main categories of management goals with cost projections. They are drafting a project schedule up front in order to have cost estimates for the Protect and Preserve Scottsdale Task Force presentation.

- Rock Climbing Management Plan

Mr. Hamilton said that staff is completing the scope of work draft that will go out to the archeological firms and anticipates that additional information will be available in time for the next Commission meeting.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Hamilton said that various types of signage are being developed for different areas. Commissioners will be given an opportunity to give input on the signage. Mr. Hamilton explained that the management plan will help clarify for police where people are allowed to be.

• APS Transmission Line Project

Mr. Hamilton said that the transmission line project started approximately two weeks ago and is expected to be completed in September.

8. UPCOMING MEETING DATES, LOCATIONS, AND AGENDA ITEMS

All Dates listed are Tentative and subject to amendment:

- Possible Special Meeting dates – Jul 13; Aug 10; Aug 17; Aug 24
- Regular Meetings – September 7; October 5; November 2

11. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Engelking asked that discussion regarding recommendations for Police Park Ranger training opportunities be agendaized for a future meeting.

12. ADJOURNMENT

COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. COMMISSIONER ENGELKING SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO, VICE-CHAIR LIPPS, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, ENGELKING, HACKBARTH, OLSSON, AND SMITH VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 6:22 p.m.

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